



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2019

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF AVIATION ANNOUNCE FIRST
NONSTOP FLIGHT FROM CHICAGO TO TEL AVIV IN MORE THAN 20 YEARS**

*EL AL Israel Airlines to start nonstop service between Chicago's O'Hare International Airport
and Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport in 2020*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) and its newest air carrier partner, EL AL Israel Airlines, announced today new nonstop service between Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) and Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport (TLV) beginning in March 2020. This is the first nonstop service to Tel Aviv in more than 20 years. Chicago will become one of a few cities in the nation, and the only city in the Central U.S. region, to offer nonstop scheduled service to Israel.

This new service is a direct result of Mayor Emanuel's diplomatic efforts to increase trade and collaboration with Israel. Chicago to Tel Aviv air service is expected to bring \$70 million in annual economic impact to the Chicago region.

"New service to Tel Aviv by EL AL Israel Airlines is proof that our investments in O'Hare are paying off, as more people throughout the world want to travel to Chicago than ever before," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "From the Midwest to the Middle East, O'Hare is making what's already the best-connected city in the nation more accessible for travelers throughout the world."

During his tenure, Mayor Emanuel has prioritized growing the partnership between Chicago and Israel, making trips to promote investment and innovation by Israeli companies in the City Chicago. In 2017, Mayor Emanuel and Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai signed the Chicago Tel Aviv Yafo Partnership, which advances collaboration between the two cities on economic development efforts, innovation and research, education and river rehabilitation projects.

"We are pleased to announce nonstop flights between Israel and Chicago," said EL AL Vice President Commercial and Industry Affairs Michael Strassburger. "The City of Chicago is one of the most important academic, cultural, industrial and business centers in the United States and is an especially attractive destination for tourism and business. As part of EL

AL's expanding network, and in response to the demand from our customers, including business travelers, we are inaugurating a nonstop flight to make Israel more accessible for U.S. travelers. We look forward to growing alongside Chicago-O'Hare as it expands its terminals and increases its global connectivity."

The new service will be offered three times weekly, with flights departing O'Hare on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday using a 282-seat Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft, offering three service classes: Business, Premium and Economy.

"New nonstop services to Tel Aviv and other key international destinations at O'Hare are fueling Chicago's leading connectivity to the world," said Jamie L. Rhee, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Aviation. "We welcome our newest airline partner, EL AL Israel Airlines, and we thank them for choosing to launch Chicago – Tel Aviv service. Each new service fuels more business, tourism and travel opportunities for Chicago and throughout the world while creating economic opportunity for the people right here at home."

This announcement is indicative of the strong partnership between Chicago and Israel, as Chicago counts Petach Tikva, near Tel Aviv, as a Sister City. The Chicago metro area boasts one of the highest Jewish populations in the nation with nearly 300,000 Jewish residents. The new service will make it easier to keep Chicago's Jewish community connected to friends and family abroad.

"I believe there is no better way to connect the State of Israel to the city of Chicago as the gateway to the Midwest and beyond, than with a nonstop flight from Chicago's O'Hare airport to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport," said Israel Consul General Aviv Ezra. "I would like to thank Mayor Rahm Emanuel for his leadership and for working together with the Consulate to make this vision finally a reality. This flight is a win-win economically, culturally and financially, bringing both Tel Aviv and Chicago closer. We look forward to getting Israelis addicted to deep dish pizza, and Chicagoans hooked on hummus."

This new service will benefit Chicago's growing global business and trade partnerships across Israel, where 25 Chicago-area companies have operations.

"Israel is one of our closest global partners, and EL AL's new nonstop flight from Chicago to Tel Aviv will further strengthen our connection," said Andrea Zopp, president and CEO of World Business Chicago. "The flight will help forward our Tel Aviv-Yafo – Chicago Economic Partnership and our sister city relationship with Petach Tikva."

The new service to Tel Aviv is the eighth new international service to Chicago announced or scheduled to begin in 2019.

As the best-connected hub in the U.S. for three years in a row and second most connected in the world, Chicago-O'Hare continues to increase services to new and underserved regions across the country and throughout the world. A total of 37 new routes have already been

announced for 2019, including new nonstop services to Athens, Barcelona and Lisbon. This steady expansion builds on a record year in 2018—with nearly 50 new routes added in 2018, fueling record levels of passengers and cargo carried, and propelling Chicago-O'Hare to surpass Atlanta for the most operations in the nation. The significant increase in passenger traffic at Chicago's airports has driven tourism to new heights, with a record 57 million visitors to the City of Chicago last year.

Chicago's air connectivity stands to further thrive, with a modernized airfield and \$8.5 billion plan by the City and the airlines to set the stage for O'Hare's biggest terminal expansion yet. These investments are a part of Mayor Emanuel's O'Hare 21 vision, designed to modernize facilities, deliver more gates, new passenger amenities, more economic opportunity for the City of Chicago, and keep travelers worldwide connected to Chicago.

For more information about EL AL and to purchase tickets later this month, please visit www.elal.com.

#